

Sibley Farm Project Update: February 22, 2012

Since the beginning of January, efforts to protect the Sibley and Warner Farms have continued to advance on several fronts.

The public fundraising campaign needed to raise the final \$650,000 needed to cover the \$2.91 million total project cost was launched by the three non-profit organizations (Mass Audubon, Greater Worcester Land Trust, and Common Ground Land Trust) in late January. As of today, a total of \$237,000 in gifts and pledges have been received towards that goal. Several foundation proposals have been submitted and we are awaiting decisions. Plans for the next 2½ months include mailings, house parties, and outreach via Spencer Cable Access, the web, and other media. Those interested in helping with a contribution should go to www.sibleyfarm.org.

Discussions continue with several landowners on the west side of Greenville Street whose properties may be protected and added to Spencer State Forest with partial funding from the Landscape Partnership grant awarded in December. Details about these properties and a timeline for acquisition will be shared as they become available.

As mentioned in the January update, Mass Audubon contracted with an environmental consulting firm in the fall to complete a hazardous waste reconnaissance of the property as part of its routine due diligence. That study revealed two sites where further investigation was recommended. One, a minor oil stain in the basement of the former Warner house, has now been remediated. The more substantial is an old farm dump in the northeastern part of the property. Additional testing suggests that the threat of contamination from the site is minimal, and plans for its remediation are advancing in discussions among DCU, Mass Audubon, and the Greater Worcester Land Trust, in consultation with the state's Department of Environmental Protection. Remediation activities will require approval of the Spencer Conservation Commission because of the site's proximity to wetlands, and a filing is anticipated in March.

If you have questions about this report, please contact either Spencer Town Planner Michelle Buck (508-885-7500 x180) or Charlie Wyman of Mass Audubon (781-259-2174).